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# U.S. WARSHIPS POISED 50 MILES OFF LEBANON

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JERUSALEM — U.S. warships were reported 50 miles off the coast of Lebanon, within operational distance for a possible strike against Shiite terrorists, analysts here said.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said last night that Israel would consider helping the U.S. in a joint military operation, but had not yet been asked.

"If we will be asked, we will consider it," Shamir said during a tour of Kiryat Gat, a town southeast of Tel Aviv.

In Washington, Pentagon officials stressed that two warships and support vessels stationed in the eastern Mediterranean had received no orders to prepare for a strike.

Pentagon officials insisted that the aircraft carriers Kennedy and Nimitz and a Mediter-

anean Amphibious Ready Group of 22 warships and 1900 Marines were on a "routine patrol pattern" south of Cyprus.

Another 1900 Marines were moved out of Spain yesterday to join the battle fleet.

Intelligence analysts here said such a strike would only take place if one of the American hostages was killed.

But they added that Israeli intelligence has obtained "lots of hard information on the sheiks and families who stand behind the terrorists."

Terrorists holding at least five American hostages have threatened to kill them Monday unless Israel secures the release of 400 Shiite prisoners of the Christian South Lebanese Army.

Shamir has rejected the demand, and Washington is not pressuring Israel to give in.